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<CT>Mortal Change

<CS>Life After Death in *Paradise Lost*

<AN>Mandy Green

In this essay I shall be looking at the effects of death's entrance into the world, as an immediate consequence of the first sin on earth, when Eve, and then Adam in turn, disobey God's sole command and eat the forbidden fruit. To extend our understanding of the different aspects of death, I shall draw on Milton's definition of the four degrees of death in *De doctrina Christiana*, and, in order to deepen our understanding of the effects of death's presence on humankind, I shall compare the aftermath of the earthly Fall with the experience of the fallen angels. By investigating the spiritual condition of Adam and Satan, in particular, I hope to throw new light on the importance of human agency in the process of spiritual regeneration and degeneration, and by revisiting the concept of *apokatastasis*, mediated through George Rust's *A Letter of Resolution concerning Origen* (London, 1661), I intend to reconsider Milton's rendering of the exactions of divine justice and the possibilities of grace and pardon at work in the poem.

<A>1

Adam is stunned when Eve returns blithely announcing that she has tasted the fruit expressly forbidden to them by God. Paralyzed with shock, Adam experiences a presentiment of death itself and

<POET>Astonied stood and Blank, while horror chill

Ran through his veins, and all his joynts relax'd;

From his slack hand the Garland wreath'd for *Eve*

Down drop'd, and all the faded Roses shed.¹ (9.890–93)

<TXFL>At this moment he is scarcely able to credit what has happened, and demands incredulously: "*How art thou lost, how on a sudden lost, / Defac't, deflourd and now to*

Death devote?" (9.900–01; emphasis added). But the garland of faded roses, the first flowers to wither in Eden,² have already become, in truth, a wreath for Eve,³ and it is not long before Adam has resolved to die with Eve rather than live on in an Eden that he knows would be no paradise without her. Bereft of her informing presence, the garden will no longer be a "Wilderness of sweets" (5.294) but, he mournfully reflects, a desolate expanse of "wilde Woods forlorn" (9.910).

Adam's outburst, as he is confronted by his consort, "Defac't, deflourd and now to Death devote," goes some way to encapsulating this "mortal change" (10.273) that Eve has undergone, and which Milton unfolds more fully in *De doctrina Christiana*, where he defines four degrees of death (1.12).⁴ Eve's state at this point in the poem can be helpfully illuminated by this passage from his theological treatise. An integral part of the first degree of death is an immediate *maiestas oris humani imminuta* ("lessening of the majesty of the human countenance"), a diminution of the divine image in humankind. The second degree, *mors spiritualis*, the death of the spiritual life, is the *privatio . . . gratiae divinae* ("privation of divine grace") and spiritual deflowering of the unregenerate sinner, "Et hæc quidem mors lapsum hominis eodem momento, nedum eodem die consecuta est" (And this death did indeed follow hard on man's fall at the same moment, not just on the same day) (*DDC* 1.12, OM 8:430–33). The third degree, *mors corporalis*, the physical death of the human body now doomed to die, need not be "one stroak . . . / Bereaving sense" (10.809–10), but a "living Death" (10.788), in which life is experienced as death in slow motion, "A long days dying to augment our paine" (10.964). Milton helpfully amplifies the notion of a "living death" in *De doctrina Christiana* where he blurs the distinction between life and death by identifying all "labores, aerumnae, morbi" (the toils, sorrows and diseases) which afflict the body as intimations of mortality, "nisi corporalis, quae dicitur mortis praeludia" (nothing but the

precursors of what is called bodily death) (*DDC* 1.13, OM 8:440–41). The fourth degree is the everlasting death of the damned, those who remain unregenerate and who are doomed to eternal torment. It is the punishment of the fallen angels, who were clearly warned before their revolt in heaven that disobedience would result in their being “Cast out from God and blessed vision . . . / Into utter darkness” to suffer this torment from that moment onward “without redemption, without end” (5.613–15). It seems that all except this fourth and final degree of death can be followed by regeneration and rebirth. In contrasting the effects of disobedience in humankind and the fallen angels, it is with the second and fourth degrees of death that I shall be chiefly concerned here in order to engage more closely with the possibilities offered in the poem for regeneration and renewal.

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton makes the spiritual death of the fallen immediately apprehensible by demonstrating the effects upon Adam of the deadly cycle of sin and death that follows hard upon his disobedience, while he remains alienated from God and estranged from Eve. We witness here Adam’s inability to resist alone the downward pull of death and despair as he spends the bitter hours of lonely isolation both in overintellectualizing the ways of God to man and in abandoning himself to a “Sea of passion” (10.718), buffeted by the negative emotions of “guilt, / And shame, and perturbation, and despaire, / Anger, and obstinacie, and hate, and guile” (10.112–14). It is at this point in the poem that we may be reminded of another experience of falling from grace—that of Satan and the other fallen angels. While his followers remain obdurately impenitent, the possibility of Satan himself being moved to relent is raised, but only to remain a prospect beyond the reach of the text before us.

After rousing his followers from their prostration on the burning lake, Satan holds a council in hell so that they may devise a plan that will give their continued existence purpose and meaning. As the debate unfolds, different speakers speculate about the future: Belial holds out hope that God “in time may much remit / His anger” (2.210–11), while Mammon even entertains the possibility that God may yet “relent / And publish Grace to all” (2.237–38). Although the fallen angels reflect upon the possibility of some mollification in God’s attitude toward them, they prove unable to conceive of relenting themselves: “new Subjection” (2.239) is considered too high a price for God’s forgiveness.⁵

By showing the fallen angels debating the possibility of reconciliation with God and responding in various ways to the experience of damnation, Milton demonstrates that they are individuals who retain some measure of free will. The fact that the fallen angels, without exception, scorn the possibility of grace and exercise their power of choice by a continuing commitment to evil, serves only to justify God’s exclusion of them all from his mercy. Since the freedom permitted to them is put to the pursuit of their “own dark designs” (1.213), it vindicates their consignment to everlasting perdition as by “reiterated crimes” they “Heap on [themselves] damnation” (1.214–15).⁶ Milton seems intent here on justifying the ways of God in his treatment of the fallen angels: their reprobation is seen to rest not so much on divine will as on their own obduracy.

Although Milton defends a doctrine of universal salvation in *De doctrina Christiana*, asserting that “quod contra planè idque saepè testatus est Deus, velle se omnium salutem, nullius interitum . . . nihil odisse quod fecit, nihil omisisse quod ad salute omnium sufficeret” (God has clearly—and frequently at that—testified that he wants the salvation of all and the death of none [. . . he] hates nothing that he has made and has left out nothing that might suffice for the salvation of all) (*DDC* 1.4, OM 8:76–

77), Milton has the prospect of humankind's redemption primarily in view in *De doctrina Christiana*, just as he has in *Paradise Lost*. The fate of Satan and those who fall with him was apparently sealed at the time of the Son's exaltation. It is difficult to deny that the seemingly arbitrary and unnecessarily provocative manner in which the Father announces his Son's promotion helps to precipitate the revolt of Satan and his followers. The Father may be "inclined to dictatorial pronouncements,"⁷ as Michael Bryson and others have pointed out, but, in the exaltation of His Son, he surpasses himself in the uncompromising manner of his declaration. Rather than celebrating the undoubted benefits of the new arrangement, whereby the Son becomes the mediator between the Father and the angelic host, he attempts to enforce their obedience by the unmitigated harshness of the threatened punishment for disobedience: "him who disobeyes / Mee disobeyes, breaks union, and that day / Cast out from God and blessed vision" (5.611–13).

This is the second death, the punishment of deprivation, which entails the loss of divine grace and protection, and to which is added eternal torment, as is vouchsafed by the fallen angel Moloch in his stark account of their suffering:

<POET> what can be worse
 Then to dwell here, driv'n out from bliss, condemn'd
 In this abhorred deep to utter woe;
 Where pain of unextinguishable fire
 Must exercise us without hope of end. (2.85–89)

<TXFL>And yet the very fact of the continuing freedom of choice accorded to the fallen angels seems to allow for the possibility of a different outcome, intriguing readers with the prospect that they may yet be able to seek mercy and forgiveness and be pardoned, and encouraging readers to reflect with them upon "what hope the never-ending flight /

Of future dayes may bring, what chance, what change / Worth waiting" (2.221–23).

Toying with the paradoxical relationship of free will, fixed fate, and foreknowledge absolute, the text of *Paradise Lost* leaves the matter tantalizingly uncertain. When God declares, "Man therefore shall find grace, / The other none" (3.131–32), is he simply speaking with the absolute foreknowledge of an omniscient God—therefore knowing full well that the fallen angels will never choose to repent—or is he ordaining this to be inevitably so, in which case the fallen angels are either incapable of repentance or, more disturbingly, would be denied forgiveness even if they were to repent? Either way, the final outcome remains the same, of course: the fallen angels are ultimately placed beyond the hope of redemption, excluded from the restorative movement that shapes the last two books of the poem; they are to suffer the fourth and final degree of death.

And yet, despite the apparent inevitability of this outcome, the question is asked insistently during Satan's haunting soliloquy on Mount Niphates, when the poem invites us to consider, were Satan to relent and seek to return to God, would he deny him a share in the grace of salvation? Unlike his comrades, Satan seems to be shown as genuinely poised on the point of seeking to return to God.⁸ The reader knows, of course, that this will not happen because of the earlier pronouncement by God that Satan will not find grace, but at this very moment, as Satan tentatively embraces the possibility of repentance, "But say I could repent" (4.93), Milton creates a breathtaking moment in which that knowledge is not so much forgotten as suppressed. Now the question, of course, becomes not simply will Satan repent, but *can* Satan repent, and even if he could repent, would God forgive him? The contrasting conditions of humankind and the fallen angel are vividly enacted by such moments of suppressed memory and knowledge, such revisiting of Satan's situation at the crisis of the human couple's fall.

In *De doctrina Christiana*, Milton had affirmed that God is gracious and merciful, quoting Chronicles 30:9: “neque avertet faciem à vobis, si convertamini ad ipsum” (nor will he turn his face away from you, if you should turn back to him) (*DDC* 1.19, OM 8:570–71). Does this assurance apply to Satan and the fallen angels too? Apparently not. For while the will to seek forgiveness is necessary, it is insufficient for salvation, which also depends on the accession of grace. Humankind’s regeneration likewise depends on the accession of grace, but this is freely, though not irresistibly, offered by God to fallen humanity. The second death, as it is experienced by the damned, seems by contrast to leave the fallen angels either unwilling to turn back to God or unable to do so because God chooses to withhold his grace. Indeed, as Satan’s soliloquy on Mount Niphates builds to a crisis point, he is found to lack the conviction that he has the power to effect a lasting change in himself and so, in consequence, he sees reaching out to God as futile. In any event, God’s mercy isn’t put to the ultimate test, but we are left to wonder whether either Satan or God has the capacity to change since both remain entrenched in their respective positions. As Satan astutely observes: “as farr / From granting hee, as I from begging peace” (4.103–04). We shall see Adam too temporarily caught in this double bind: God will not relent until Adam repents, but he can only turn to God from a sense of the divine mercy and when he no longer despairs of forgiveness.⁹

Readers, together with the fallen angels themselves, are reminded by the aftermath of Satan’s “triumphant” return to hell that the latter owe any freedom of action they enjoy to divine permission. After bringing about the Fall of humankind, Satan’s victory is marred by his sudden and humiliating metamorphosis into the serpentine form he had once freely assumed to deceive Eve, as “a greater power / Now rul’d him, punisht in the shape he sin’d, / According to his doom” (10.515–17). Satan’s reluctant transformation, imposed upon him from without, is rapidly followed

by the wholesale metamorphoses of his followers, “the dire form / Caught by Contagion” (10.543–44). A grove of trees created in the likeness of the forbidden tree springs up before them, and, with a certain grim poetic justice, they are overtaken by a compulsive desire to taste the fruit that again and again turns to “bitter Ashes” (10. 566) in their mouths. Caught in a finely executed recursive loop, the devils are unable to break free from the delusion until permitted to do so: “oft they fell / Into the same illusion, not as Man / Whom they triumph’d once lapst. Thus were they plagu’d / And worn with Famin” (10.570–73). Whereas the fallen angels are doomed to an endless recurrence, Adam and Eve eventually break free from recapitulating “the fruitless hours” (9.1188) that follow their fall. This is the vital distinction that dominates the poem after the Fall; the contours of book 10 are a reworking of the catastrophic forces we have already seen working so powerfully upon the fallen angels. Unlike Satan, Adam will not be left to flounder alone without providential help; what breaks the deadlock is the result of human agency and divine grace combining mysteriously together in such a way that it is impossible to say which came first.

<A>3

After a brief spell of intoxication and euphoria, Adam and Eve wake to a full realization of their fallen condition; each turns on the other and a barrage of recriminations follows: “Thus they in mutual accusation spent / The fruitless hours, but neither self-condemning, / And of thir vain contest appeer’d no end” (9.1187–89). Eve is the first to break free from the compulsive circularity of the first “blame game.” With her simple admission of guilt to the Son, she assumes full responsibility for her actions: “The Serpent me beguil’d and I did eate” (10.162). Adam, conversely, attempts to evade responsibility for his offense and casts the blame elsewhere, on Eve explicitly and on

mental and spiritual experience in a way that is both physically and emotionally apprehensible.

Adam quickens to life on a soft, flowery bank as “new wak’t,” refreshed “from soundest sleep” (8.253). His first experience of being is the warming caress of the sun and, as though invigorated by its energizing influence, he springs upright. This instinctive action, itself an expression of “lively vigour” (8.269), is also seen to be a positive affirmation of life on Adam’s part. At this point, as Timothy Harrison observes, “To experience awakening along with Adam is to feel life in its purity, to apprehend a vitality that is no longer in dialectical tension with death.”¹¹ Adam’s happiness is enhanced by feeling at one with the world about him, which seems to share in his delight: “all things smil’d, / With fragrance and with joy my heart oreflow’d” (8.265–66). In marked contrast to this scene of radiant light, where the general mood is one of harmony, joy, and carefree optimism, the second is dark, terrifying, and demonic, set in the very depth of the blackest night. Adam’s dark night of the soul is passed alone in a state of restless, tortured apprehension in which everything around him assumes a threatening and nightmarish character. The “black Air” and “dreadful gloom” amplify his fears and anxieties and “to his evil Conscience represented / All things with double terror” (10.847–50).¹²

In addition to the obvious contrast between the bright sunlight of the first passage and the unbroken darkness of the second, at least three other antitheses are used to articulate the two emblematic scenes: vital warmth is contrasted with deathly cold, a soft bank with hard ground, and while in the first sketch the horizontal sweep of the pencil is effectively offset by an emphatic vertical line as Adam stands upright for the first time, in the second no such countermovement occurs. Thus, the sluggish resistance to life and activity, which follows hard upon Adam’s fall and alienation from

God, is most accurately represented in his continuing physical prostration. We are made to feel the immanence of death in the negation of all the conditions essential for life, and, by a natural association of ideas, the scene as a whole serves to ally Adam ever more closely with "The black tartareous cold Infernal dregs / Adverse to life" (7.238–39).

It rapidly becomes apparent that spiritual death, like creation, is a continuous process and that death, as Adam comes to recognize, need not be "one stroak . . . / Bereaving sense," but "endlesse miserie / From this day onward" (10.809–11). After the initial offense of eating the apple, the process of falling continues. Arguably, the Fall has not in its profoundest and fullest sense taken place until Adam's outpouring of despair and hopelessness here. As we listen to Adam's long complaint, we cannot help but recall Satan's great apostrophe to the sun at the beginning of book 4.

Adam has begun here to reenact that drama of despair and damnation. Believing himself "miserable / Beyond all past example and future, / To *Satan*, only like both crime and doom" (10.839–41), Adam shares Satan's conviction of the absolute finality of his loss. Satan's dilemma, "Me miserable! which way shall I flie / Infinite wrauth, and infinite despaire?" (4.73–74), is Adam's also. His horrified realization that "in the lowest deep a lower deep / Still threatning to devour me opens wide" (4.76–77) is matched by Adam's consciousness of a vertiginous "Abyss of fears / And horrors" "out of which" he can "find no way, from deep to deeper plung'd!" (10.842–44). Eve may fall first but Adam falls further. For in this lengthy lament, Adam seems poised on the brink of utter despair, drawn toward the satanic logic of "All hope excluded thus . . . all Good to me is lost," yet finally holding back from embracing the desire for evildoing (*male faciendi libido* [DDC 1.11, OM 8:420]) and the chilling simplicity of the fallen angel's axiomatic conclusion, "Evil be thou my Good" (4.105, 109–10).

Fallen Adam's partial perspective here excludes from his vision one half of the divine nature: he sees only the God of justice and wrath, and this is reflected in a shift in the emblematic suggestiveness of light and the sun in particular. While the sun's rays were primarily an emblem of God's benevolence and his grace, heavenly rays could also shadow forth his wrath and destructive power.¹³ It is both a measure and evidence of fallen Adam's spiritual condition that divine light now seems blindingly strong and fierce, "insufferably bright" (9.1084). Adam shrinks from seeing or being seen by the heavenly presence. His agonized plea for protection, "cover me ye Pines, / Ye Cedars, with innumerable boughs / Hide me, where I may never see them more" (9.1088–90),¹⁴ is strongly reminiscent of the doomed Faustus's desperate cry: "Mountains and hills, come, come and fall on me / And hide me from the heavy wrath of God" (*Dr. Faustus*, 13.76–77), which in turn echoes those scriptural passages that center on the loss of divine protection and the fearful expectation of divine punishment.¹⁵ In the apocalyptic vision of Saint John, those who have incurred divine displeasure urgently beseech the mountains and rocks: "Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb" (Rev 6:16).¹⁶

Adam attempts to insulate himself against the anticipated blaze of God's wrath by retreating "Into the thickest Wood" to where the fig tree creates a "Pillard shade" (9.1100, 1106). Milton is concerned to make the reader aware that the fig tree in question here is not the common fruit-bearing tree, but the Indian fig, and it seems significant in this context that it is the way the tree acts as an invaluable protection against the sun's fierce heat that features in contemporary accounts. In his famous botanical study, John Gerald observes, "the Indians do use [it] for couverture against the extreme heate of the sunne, wherewith they are greeveously vexed."¹⁷ Milton too draws attention to the way in which the fig tree will be prized by "the *Indian* Herdsman

shunning heate” who will shelter in its “thickest shade” (9.1108, 1110). The likelihood that Milton intends more than to anticipate the harsh change in climatic conditions in the fallen world,¹⁸ where the sun will “affect the Earth with . . . heat / Scarce tollerable” (10.653–54), is considerably heightened when we reflect that it was under the influence of the “full-blazing Sun” (4.29) that Satan, haunted by his remembrance of goodness, perceived the truth about himself, considered repentance, but finally refused to relent and give glory to “Heav’ns matchless King” (4.41). We may recall too Saint John’s account of the operation of the fourth vial “of the wrath of God,” which acts upon the sun: “And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory” (Rev. 15:18–19). Nevertheless, the blinding light and fierce heat of the sun is not purely punitive, it is potentially remedial. While it is a manifestation of God’s wrath, it is yet also an instrument of his mercy, since such chastening should help move sinners to repent (DDC 1.19, OM 8:575).

However, the light that should illumine serves only to blind the darkened minds of the unregenerate, those who, through their continued commitment to sin, are “blinded more” (3.200). The initial effect of this line of interpretation then is to accentuate Adam’s resemblance to Satan and align him more closely with those who will “stumble on, and deeper fall” (3.201). Since humankind falls victim to Satan’s wiles, whereas the rebel angels fell “by thir own suggestion” (3.129), God has ordained that “Man therefore shall find grace, / The other none” (3.131–32); Adam is consequently mistaken in believing himself to be “To *Satan* only like both crime and doom” (10.841). Moreover, this crucial distinction is set forth in terms that confirm the existence of the emblematic patterning relating to the sun’s rays which we have been tracing here.

Genesis relates how the Lord God came to execute his judgment on the fallen pair: “in the cool of the day” (Gen. 3:8). By extending the significance of this narrative detail, Milton makes explicit the symbolic meaning attached to the timing of the Son’s arrival to judge humankind:

<POET>Now was the Sun in Western cadence low
 From Noon, and gentle Aires due at thir hour
 To fan the Earth now wak’d, and usher in
 The Evening coole when he from wrauth more coole
 Came the mild Judge and Intercessor both. (10.92–96)

<TXFL>It is surely not without significance that in *Paradise Regained*, directly after he has declared, “all hope is lost / Of my reception into grace” (*PR* 3.204–05), Satan yet turns to Jesus and wistfully concedes:

<POET> though to that gentle brow
 Willingly I could flye, and hope thy raign,
 From that placid aspect and meek regard,
 Rather then aggravate my evil state,
 Would stand between me and thy Fathers ire,
 (Whose ire I dread more than the fire of Hell)
 A shelter and a kind of shading cool
 Interposition, as a summers cloud. (*PR* 3.215–22)

<TXFL>After countless ages have elapsed with Satan entrenched in obduracy, the fallen angel finds hope stirring once more as he begins to entertain the possibility of Jesus acting as *his* intercessor, protecting him from the full blaze of the Father’s anger—providing “a kind of shading cool,” as “a summers cloud” intermits the fierce rays of the summer sun. All is apparently to no avail; though he cannot obtain grace, Satan may still

yearn for it. Like Faustus, Satan does not believe that he can find forgiveness; in both cases their lack of saving faith seems justified; both confront a prospect of “deathless Death” (*PL* 10.798).

Adam’s chilling fear lest he should die a “living Death” (10.788) is quickly quelled by his reasoned conviction that, since man is mortal, all bodily, mental, and spiritual functions would cease at death, so “All of me then shall die” (10.792).¹⁹ He does not yet realize that physical death or *mors corporalis*, the third degree of death, is not an end that gives final closure but only a temporary state of extinction until the Last Judgment. Adam is not yet aware of the terrifying truth of those phrases, “the sense of endless” or “lasting woes” (10.754, 742), he uses loosely to express his present state of misery, when literally applied to the fate of those who will remain unregenerate and are to be consigned with the fallen angels to an eternity of damnation at the Last Judgment as part of the fourth degree of death. It is then that, in a double paradox, death will be “the gate to life” (12.571) to the faithful, whereas the reprobate shall indeed “die a living Death” (10.788). For while the saved may look forward to a “death like sleep . . . wafting to immortal Life” (12.434–35), the unregenerate will wake at the doom of time to confront an infinitude of torment from which there seems no hope of an escape.

In *A Letter of Resolution concerning Origen*, George Rust, one of the Cambridge Platonists and a fellow of Milton’s own college, Christ’s, had argued that, given “this never-to-be-ended doom of intolerable pain and anguish of body and minde” to be suffered by the damned, “the greatest favour God could doe them [would be] never to have brought them into *being*” in the first place.²⁰ Indeed, forced to confront the horror of that reality, Moloch avers total annihilation to be better than life at any price, and “happier far / Then miserable to have eternal being” (2.97–98). But it is Marlowe’s Faustus who gives the most haunting expression to the agonizing expectation of

“deathless pain” (PL 10.775) endlessly prolonged, as his desperate plea for an end is overtaken by the appalling certainty that there will be no final release, no end to the deserts of vast eternity that stretch out before him:

<POET>O God if thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
Yet for Christ’s sake whose blood hath ransomed me,
Impose some end to my incessant pain.
Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
A hundred thousand, and at last be saved.

O, no end is limited to damned souls! (*Doctor Faustus*, 13.89–94)

<TXFL>In *Paradise Lost* there is not much doubt about the future reserved for those saved at the Last Judgment: they will enjoy “eternal Bliss” in “Ages of endless date.” The future prospects of Satan, however, are less certain. The text suggests alternative possibilities.

In the first, the Father explains to the Son that after the Last Judgement hell, “her numbers full / Thenceforth shall be for ever shut” (3.332–33). With all evil—“Bad men and Angels” (3.331)—hermetically sealed off in hell,²¹ divine authority can be safely laid aside and “God shall be All in All” (3.341). There would thus seem to be no end ordained for the torment of the damned in *Paradise Lost*. But if we turn to *De doctrina Christiana*, it seems that Milton was not prepared to decide the question quite so irrevocably. At first glance, his citation of the famous verses from Matthew 25 that speak of the everlasting torment of the damned would surely seem to settle the issue: “v.41 execrandi, abite à in ignem illum aeternum, paratum diabolo et angelis eius” (accursed ones, go away from me into that eternal fire, [the one] prepared for the devil and his angels) (DDC 1.33, OM 8:886–87). However, sandwiched between these lines and the definition of the fourth and final degree of death as *mors aeterna*, Milton freely admits

to God's creation, brought about not by a sudden indiscriminate metamorphosis but as the result of a gradual process that would take place imperceptibly over the lapse of unmeasured ages, with individuals progressing at different rates, some outstripping others, while yet others lagged behind, but eventually all, without exception, would be reconciled to God and nothing would be at enmity with him.²⁸ Augustine was among those strongly opposed to this view; he insisted on the purely punitive purpose of the divine judgement against the impenitent fallen angels and the reprobate, and upheld the "scholastic" understanding of the eternity of such punishment for the damned.²⁹

Given the legalistic emphases of the theory of the Atonement developed within the Reformed tradition, it is unsurprising that the attitude of Protestant reformers had been very much in keeping with Augustine's stance. According to this understanding of the Atonement, Christ permitted himself to be punished in place of the fallen in order to satisfy the demands of justice, so that humankind's sins could be justly pardoned. In such a theological scheme, as Patrides rightly notes, "the idea of God as the very embodiment of infinite love and mercy lost something to the conception of God as the stern guardian of Divine Justice."³⁰ However, by the mid-seventeenth century there is some evidence of a softening in attitude among religious thinkers in England, as Calvinism lost its firm hold.³¹ So rigidly an enforced punishment as eternal damnation was seen to reflect, as Rust observed, "an excess of complement to the Justice of God" and lacked a due appreciation of "the infinite compassionateness" of the divine nature.³² For evidence of this shift of emphasis, we can turn once again to the case put so reasonably by Rust in *A Letter* as he attempts to redress the imbalance between God's justice and mercy.

Reflecting on the “*day of fiery vengeance*,” Rust begins by fully acknowledging that, though appalling to contemplate, the claims of justice would be met and the punishment served on the damned would be justly meted out as into the “farre-spreading Lake of slow-consuming fire and sulphureous stench the unreclaimable Devils and obstinately-wicked men shall be by the righteous hand of God precipitated. A sad pitiable Fate and torture unsufferable! But no doubt as just as great. Just, I say, not onely according to the estimation of modern *Theology* [. . .] but also in the compute and judgement of that all-righteous *minde* which judges all things by the living law of Equity.” This said, Rust seeks to persuade his reader that, while there might be those prepared to press the claims of justice so far, it would be incomprehensible that such a punishment would be inflicted by God without there being any hope of recovery and release: “But what though it be so great and just, is it therefore so quite different from the reason of all other punishments inflicted by God or man that there is nothing in it of the *End* for which they are inflicted? They are *Curative* and for the Emendation of the party suffering; but this if it be eternal in the Scholastic sense of the word leaves no place for the bettering of the sufferers, who are never to get out of this inexplicable Labyrinth of woe and misery.”³³ Moreover, since Rust cautions his reader against crediting him with proposing any accelerated process of reclamation, “according to our *hypothesis* the whole punishment of *pain* and *death* will necessarily be so long as may justly be called [eternal] in a very high sense of the word,” this heartfelt plea is even harder to resist: “What is it then that should make the merciful Governour of Heaven and earth and *hell* too, the compassionate *Father of Spirits*, either forcibly to keep off and prevent this natural course of things [i.e., gradual improvement], or, which is worse, suffer those Offers and Preparations which it induces for the bettering the present conditions of so great and so considerable a part of his Creation, and for the putting of them in a way of

return to what he at first made them, to come to nought.”³⁴ In drawing attention to God’s governance of hell, as well as heaven and earth, Rust is at pains to point out that he has the fate of Satan and the fallen angels in view too. To believe that God would seek to hinder or prevent any progress made over time is, he reasons, “to fix so harsh a Note upon the mercy and equity of the righteous Judge of all the world, that the same temper in a man we should for ever exsecrate and abominate.”³⁵

In book 3 of *Paradise Lost*, it is difficult to deny the punitive inflexibility of the Father’s pronouncement “Dye hee or Justice must” (3.210) or the relentless severity of “The rigid satisfaction death for death” (3.212), where, as Patrick Hume first noted, “The word *Rigid* seems to imply a stiffness, an unrelenting satisfaction to be made to the Almighty Justice . . . *Rigidus* Lat. Hard, stiff.” Yet these lines admit only a partial perspective on God’s nature in the poem.³⁶ If, as the Father has already pronounced, there will be a time when “God shall be All in All” (3.341), then this would suggest that, as a necessary consequence, evil will have ceased to be. Perhaps there is a just such a hint of a new beginning for Satan and his followers in *Paradise Lost* too, but no simple, clear-cut answer is provided; what the Father’s will is, and how his mind and heart works is ultimately inscrutable.

<A>5

It is certainly the case that while Adam falsely assumes a simple equivalence between his fate and that of Satan, his exclusive concern with the exactions of divine justice and his preoccupation with God’s role as punisher of his offense blind him to the possibility of divine grace and pardon, rendering him incapable at this point of recognizing tokens of divine mercy that were shown in the Son’s judgment of the human couple.³⁷

Adam struggles to understand the workings of divine justice, oscillating between blaming God and self-accusation,³⁸ but ratiocination offers no guidance here, leading Adam in wearisome circles, back always to the despairing conviction of his own culpability and the justice of God's claims upon him. At this point, Adam cannot even begin to conceive of the possibility of forgiveness:

<POET> Him after all Disputes
 Forc't I absolve: all my evasions vain,
 And reasonings, though through Mazes, lead me still
 But to my own conviction: first and last
 On mee, mee onely, as the sourse and spring
 Of all corruption, all the blame lights due. (10.828–33)

<TXFL>The convoluted twisting and turnings of self-accusation that circle back upon themselves and finally lead nowhere is traced with fine precision by Milton here: the resonant repetition of "On mee, mee onely," may look back to the Son's offer to lay down his life for humankind (3.236–37), just as it looks forward to Eve's offer to take all their punishment upon herself, but it does so to point out the differences in both cases.³⁹ Adam fails to act on this insight and take the initiative in asking for forgiveness from God, just as he failed to see the possibility of interceding for Eve when the situation might not yet have been "remediless." Adam's avowal of guilt leads nowhere—he has reached yet another dead end. Seen in isolation, guilt is thus exposed as an unproductive emotion; in *De doctrina Christiana* Milton identifies guilt as an inherent aspect of the first degree of death. As he explains, "Reatus . . . in nobis tamen velut inchoate mors seu mortis quoddam exordium est" (Guilt . . . exists in us like an incipient death or a kind of opening flourish of death) (*DDC* 1.12, OM 8:430–31â).

To find a way out of the darkness of this tortuous, twisting maze clearly lies beyond the capacity of reason alone. Milton had some insight into Adam's plight, having found himself lost in the dark reaches of the mind before finding release in turning to God; he recounts this experience in *Of Reformation*: "I doe now feele in my selfe inwrapt on the sodaine into those mazes and *Labyrinths* of dreadfull and hideous thoughts, that which way to get out, or which way to end I know not, unlesse I turne mine eyes, and with your help lift up my hands to that Eternall and Propitious Throne."⁴⁰ Left solely to its own devices, the reasoning mind can go no further forward and is doomed to circle endlessly round in the darkness. Indeed, as is commonly observed, Adam's experience resembles that of those fallen angels who "reason'd high / Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will and Fate, / Fixt Fate, free will, foreknowledg absolute, / And found no end, in wandring mazes lost" (*PL* 2.558–61) or to Satan himself, whose own musings always circle back to an impasse and the experience of damnation: "Which way I flie is Hell; my self am Hell" (*PL* 4.75). Imprisoned within his own appalled sense of self-conviction, Adam is trapped in his self-obsessive guilt and despair. Adam is released from this deadlock, not by reason but by an appeal to his emotions. In one of the most emotionally compelling scenes of the epic, Adam is jolted out of his self-absorption by the approach of Eve; she becomes Adam's guide out of the abyss, and the emotional bond that had precipitated his turning away from God is now the direct cause of Adam's return to him.

Eve's readiness to sacrifice herself for Adam should not be disregarded as a self-indulgent gesture of guilt;⁴¹ like the Son, she offers her life out of love, resolving to return "to the place of judgment" and

<POET>there with my cries importune heaven, that all

The sentence from thy head remov'd may light

On me, sole cause to thee of all this woe,

Mee mee onely just object of his ire. (PL 10.932–36)

<TXFL>While Adam's first response is to dismiss out of hand her determination to face God's wrath,⁴² her selfless wish to suffer in his stead finally releases Adam from the endless, downward spiral of anger, bitterness, and despair. Nevertheless, the savage violence of Adam's initial outburst in response to Eve's overtures of peace confirms that he is still unregenerate at that point; his heart hardened against her, Adam turns from her in anger (10.909). Eve is not so easily deterred: seeing herself as the more wretched of the two, "mee than thyself / More miserable" (10.929–30), she falls to her knees in order to implore his forgiveness. Eve's "Soft words" (10.865), working in conjunction with her tears (10.910, 937), soften Adam and cause him to relent (10.940).⁴³

Only moments before, Adam had bitterly upbraided divine providence:

<POET> O why did God,

Creator wise, that peopl'd highest Heav'n

With Spirits Masculine, create at last

This noveltie on Earth, this fair defect

Of Nature, and not fill the World at once

With Men as Angels without Feminine. (10.888–93)

<TXFL>Adam's question is now answered, and what had seemed flawed to him in God's design is now fully revealed. Eve's "softness" renders her the more natural conduit of "Prevenient Grace" (11.3), which is conducted through her tears and soft words to soften "the stonie" (11.4) in Adam's heart; the infusion of softness leads to an outflowing of forgiveness, while her "sweet attractive Grace" (4.298) is what draws him back at last to God.⁴⁴

It is only when Adam's acknowledgment of divine justice with his mind is joined by a sense of divine mercy in his heart that his narrow vision is expanded, enabling a rich, intuitive awareness of the twofold aspects of the divine nature. The face of justice and wrath at last finds its obverse and complement in mercy and love.⁴⁵ Accordingly, Adam now recalls "with what mild / And gracious temper he both heard and judg'd / Without wrauth or reviling" (10.1046–48). Thus, "softened," Adam no longer despairs. But just as Adam had thought he would be better off dead than have to face God's anger, Eve assumes it would be better to be childless than to have them all condemned to death.⁴⁶ Once again Eve wants to take the 'easy' path,⁴⁷ proposing a suicide pact that would circumvent their sentence and save their descendants from their otherwise inevitable fate, "So Death / Shall be deceav'd his glut" (10.989–90). However, Adam is now ready to recognize the promise to humankind implicit in the protoevangelion,⁴⁸ and he is able to counter Eve's proposal by offering a hopeful prospect for their future in which "the bitterness of death / Is past" (11.157–58).⁴⁹ Their faith in God's providence enables both Adam and Eve to want to go on living and have children together.

Adam now trusts that when approached with prayers and tears, God's anger too will melt and he will likewise extend his forgiveness and "relent" and "turn / From his displeasure" (10.1093–94). As the vantage point now moves upward to the heavenly perspective, we see a counterpointing of the earthly and divine, not only has "the stonie" been removed from the hearts (11.4) of the penitent couple, but the Father too, encouraged by the Son to behold them "soften'd and with tears" repenting their sin (11.110), relents in turn.

<A>6

It would seem that only in Satan's "obdured brest" (2.568) is the process of spiritual petrification fully completed. Yet as Mary Hoffman thoughtfully observes, "As much as

Satan's mind 'fixt' and unregenerate, just as much is his hell a hell of process, of endlessly recapitulating the fall and hardening his heart against the possibilities of redemption,"⁵⁰ so that "with reiterated crimes he might / Heap on himself damnation" (1.214–15). This is, of course, most clearly enacted in that moving soliloquy that opens book 4 when for the first time Satan entertains the possibility of change, "O then at last relent: is there no place / Left for Repentance, none for Pardon left?" (4.79–80), only to then harden his resolve like the "obdurate" Pharaoh (12.205) who "Humbles his stubborn heart" only to be "as Ice / More hard'nd after thaw" (12.193–94); in *De doctrina Christiana*, Milton identifies such hardening as "inveteratae malitiae et incredulitatis extrema ferme poena est"⁵¹ (pretty well the ultimate punishment of ingrained evilness and unbelief) (*DDC* 1.8, OM 8:332–33).

These lines describing the process of spiritual petrification allude to the sequence in Exodus (9–14) where it is repeatedly stated that it was God who hardened Pharaoh's heart against the Israelites. This text was of crucial importance to Reformation theology, since it had been interpreted by Saint Paul to mean that God has "mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth" (Rom. 9:18). Both passages, which leave everything to the will of God and nothing to choice, are at the very heart of orthodox Protestant teachings on salvation. Calvin argued that they seemed to afford incontrovertible evidence that salvation and damnation were wholly in God's hands (3.22.11).

In *De doctrina Christiana*, Milton puts a more positive construction on this process, explaining how "quoties indurat aut excaecat; cùm id non malitiam inspirando, immo non nisi iustis et aequis rationibus efficiat, et quibus peccatores emolliri potius debuissent quàm indurari" (whenever he hardens or else blinds someone, he brings that about not by infusing evilness, no, but only by means which are just and fair, and by

which sinners ought rather to have been softened than hardened) (*DDC* 1. 8, OM 8:330–31). And indeed, in *Paradise Lost* Milton is at pains to emphasize the inclusiveness of God’s offer to “soft’n stonie hearts” (3.189).⁵² He extends grace to *all* humankind, excluding from mercy only those who “neglect and scorn” God’s “day of grace”; it is thus only those who are obdurately “hard,” and withhold themselves from the possibility of grace, who will be “hard’nd . . . more” (3.200). Thus, while God’s grace is offered freely, it is not irresistible; human beings are free to accept or reject his call. Nevertheless, the Father firmly insists that he is ultimately responsible for the salvation of humankind: “Man shall not quite be lost, but saved who will, / Yet not of will in him, but grace in me” (3.173–74). That fallen humanity is unable to turn back to God by their own unaided efforts is made unambiguously clear by the Father’s further pronouncement that “man” owes “All his deliverance” “to me . . . and to none but me” (3.181–82). This is clearly in keeping with orthodox Protestantism, which stressed fallen humanity’s inability to contribute in any way to their own salvation. Accordingly, in the opening lines of book 11, “Prevenient Grace” has “remov’d / The stonie” from the hearts of Adam and Eve, alluding to the softening process described in Ezekiel: “And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh” (11:19). Milton draws upon these resonant scriptural echoes to provide a biblical framework to support his own symbolic structure.

We should naturally expect this viewpoint to be strengthened by what Milton has to say about the process of regeneration in *De doctrina Christiana*, and indeed the Columbia translation duly states that regeneration “is the work of God alone.”⁵³ However, this standard edition omits the crucial negative *non*, which has been reinstated in the new Oxford edition where it specifically states that the work of

regeneration “is *not* the work of God alone”: “quà qui liberantur, regenerari dicuntur et renasci et denuo creari; quod non opus unius Dei est” (those who are freed from [the second degree of death] are said to be regenerated and reborn and created anew, which is not the work of God alone) (*DDC* 1.12, OM 8:432–33).⁵⁴ It is difficult to underestimate the importance of this change in emphasis, which has been overlooked for so long.

And indeed the actual dramatization of humankind’s repentance and reconciliation to God does not evolve with quite the same emphasis on the passivity of Adam and Eve’s role in their spiritual regeneration as we might otherwise have expected. The separation of the action into two planes, the human and the divine, makes the scene of humankind’s reconciliation to God the natural corollary to the earlier scene of reconciliation between Eve and Adam. Given the evident parallelism between the two movements, and the temporal priority of the earthly to the heavenly sequence, it is hard to dismiss the pivotal significance of this connection, especially since the reconciliation of Eve and Adam, like the subsequent reconciliation of man and God, is without scriptural precedent. It is Eve’s initiative in approaching Adam submissively, with soft words and tears, which secures his softened response and enables him to understand how God may likewise relent when humbly approached with prayers and repentance:

<POET>What better can we do, then to the place
 Repairing where he judg’d us, prostrate fall
 Before him reverent, and there confess
 Humbly our faults, and pardon beg, with tears
 Watering the ground, and with our sighs the Air
 Frequenting, sent from hearts contrite, in sign
 Of sorrow unfeign’d, and humiliation meek.
 Undoubtedly, he will relent and turn

From his displeasure.

(10.1086–94)

<TXFL>The reconciliation of Adam and Eve is arguably the hinge upon which humankind's salvation turns. In the opening lines of book 11, the reader is reminded that their repentance has only been made possible by the softening action of "Prevenient Grace," which has "remov'd / The stonie from thir hearts, & made new flesh / Regenerate grow instead" (11.3–5), but this explanation is only offered after we have seen Adam and Eve struggle and strive on their own, without any apparent heavenly help or assistance.

In his gloss on these lines, Patrick Hume describes how prevenient grace, "made a relenting Tenderness, like the Flesh of a newborn Babe grow in their Harts, in stead of their stubborn Hardness," and goes on to interpret this change specifically in terms of Christian regeneration: "The Conversion of a Sinner, is in Scripture-Phrase styled, Regeneration, a New-birth; *Regeneratio*, Lat. Our Saviour discoursed with Nicodemus, John 3.3 Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of god." Released from *mors spiritualis*, the second degree of death, Adam and Eve experience an inward change that is a type of Christian rebirth. This comes about not only through the work of God alone but also through the efforts of Adam and Eve. Indeed, as we have seen, the change is as much generated from within as effected from without. Whatever Milton imagines to be the ultimate fate of Satan, in *Paradise Lost* he remains locked in an intractable agon with the Father in which neither side is prepared to compromise.

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NOTES

¹ In *Mocked with Death: Tragic Overliving from Sophocles to Milton* (Baltimore, 2004), Emily R. Wilson perceptively observes how the internal rhyme embedded here in “faded” and “shed” draws attention to the tolling of the word “dead” (180). All quotations from Milton’s poetry are taken from *Paradise Lost* in *The Riverside Milton*, ed. Roy Flannagan (Boston, 1998). All subsequent references to Milton’s poetry are from this edition and are supplied parenthetically in the text.

² The rose petals that shower down upon the unfallen human couple as they sleep are repaired with the morning (*PL* 5.772–73)

³ Frederick Edward Hulme, *Bards and Blossoms; or, The Poetry, History, and Associations of Flowers* (Oxford, 1877), records how in early modern England it was customary at the funerals of “young maidens” for “a young woman of the same age as the one being mourned [to] lead the funeral procession, carrying a wreath of white flowers to represent the purity of the deceased, and ‘that eternal crown of glory reserved for her in heaven’” (50–51). Eve’s wreath thus forms a stark contrast to the “crown of glory that fadeth not away” (1 Pet. 5:4). All quotations from the Bible are from the King James Version.

⁴ All quotations from *De doctrina Christiana* are taken from *The Complete Works of John Milton*, vol. 8, parts 1 and 2, ed. John K. Hale and J. Donald Cullington (Oxford, 2012).

⁵ In an insightful article, Tzachi Zamir, “Death, Life, and Agency in *Paradise Lost*,” in *Milton Studies*, vol. 56, ed. Laura L. Knoppers, 201–30 (Pittsburgh, 2015), points to “the four faces of dead agency: persevering in futile action (Moloch), passive resignation

to one's state (Belial), falsely belittling what one should truly seek (Mammon), and drawing others into one's own wretched position (Beelzebub)" (222).

⁶ Milton explains the process more fully in *De doctrina Christiana*: since sin is "morsque vitae spiritualis" (the death of the spiritual life), it follows that "peccata enim quo plura accedunt, eo magis peccatores morti addicunt, . . . divinoque auxilio et gratia suaque primaveva gloria magis denudant" (the more sins are added, the more they sentence the sinners to death . . . and the more they strip them of divine help and grace and of their own pristine glory") (*DDC* 1.12, OM 8:432–33).

⁷ Michael Bryson, *The Atheist Milton* (Farnham, 2012), 83.

⁸ In his classic article on "The Salvation of Satan," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 28 (1967), 467–78, C. A. Patrides is quick to pass over this passage, merely noting, "the dramatic context demanded that Satan's redemption should at least be entertained as a possibility" (472). See, too, Neil Forsyth, *The Satanic Epic* (Princeton, N.J., 2003), 148–52, for a richly responsive account of this passage.

⁹ This catch-22 had been captured so well by Donne: "Yet grace if thou repent thou canst not lacke / But who shall give thee that grace to begin?" ("Holy Sonnet," 4.9–10).

¹⁰ Although Michael will reveal to Adam some of death's many faces, he is finally able to hold out to him the possibility of "a death like sleep / A gentle wafting to immortal Life" (12.434–35) for those who lead a temperate life.

¹¹ Timothy M. Harrison, "Adamic Awakening and the Feeling of Being Alive in *Paradise Lost*," in *Milton Studies*, vol. 54, ed. Laura L. Knoppers, 29–57 (Pittsburgh, 2013), 32.

¹² In *De doctrina Christiana*, Milton attributes this heightened experience of dread to the result of sin: “Reatum itaque terrores conscientiae aut comitantur aut sequuntur” (And so the terrors of conscience either accompany or else follow guilt) (*DDD*, 1.12, OM 8:430–31).

¹³ See Shahla Anand, “*Of Costliest Emblem*”: “*Paradise Lost*” and the Emblem Tradition (Lanham, Md., 1978), 61.

¹⁴ Wilson makes an interesting observation about the way “the interlocking, incantatory repetitions (‘Cover me . . . Hide me,’ ‘ye pines / Ye cedars’)” in Adam’s apostrophe here may “suggest an attempt to cover himself in language, as if the comfort of words could shield him from the sight of God” (*Mocked with Death*, 171).

¹⁵ Both “divini praesidii favoris” and “horrenda expectatio iudicii” are identified by Milton as two aspects of the first degree of death that accompany guilt; see *DDC* 1.12, OM 8:430.

¹⁶ Hosea 10:8 and Luke 23:30 similarly imply that it would be better to be dead or not to have been born than to face God’s wrath. Even Christ found it hard to withstand his Father’s wrath: in *De doctrina Christiana*, Milton argues that the cry of desolation as he died stemmed from “iraéque divinae in se effusae horribili sensu; unde illa moribunda vociferatio” (A horrifying awareness of divine anger poured upon him”) (*DDC* 1.16, OM 8:512–13).

¹⁷ John Gerald, *The Herball, or Generall Historie of Plantes* (London, 1597), 1330–31.

¹⁸ Nevertheless, Adam’s observations show him to be acutely aware that death has permeated through all aspects of nature as a result of their sin.

¹⁹ Elsewhere Milton likens this interval to a dreamless sleep in which “anima cum corpore ad diem usque resurrectionis obdormiscit” (the soul falls asleep with the body until the day of resurrection) (*DDC* 1.16, OM 8:534–35).

²⁰ George Rust, *A Letter of Resolution concerning Origen* (London, 1661), 76. Patrides discusses this work, though not directly in relation to Milton, in his article “Salvation of Satan,” where he acclaims it as “the most impressive *apologia*” of Origen’s position published in England in the seventeenth century (475). In *Milton among the Puritans: The Case for Historical Revisionism* (Farnham, 2010), Catherine Gimelli Martin claims that Rust “anticipated many aspects of Milton’s theodicy” (216), and, indeed, there is evidence of a different kind of possible connection between the two religious thinkers. Preaching at the funeral of Hugh Montgomery, First Earl of Mount Alexander, in October 1663, Rust tellingly observed, “New presbyter is but old priest writ large.” Milton’s sonnet “On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament” (1646), which contains the identical line, was not published until 1673, and so it seems at least possible that Rust may have picked up the pithy saying from Milton himself, and likewise that Milton might have been familiar with Rust’s work. See, too, Harry F. Robins, *If This Be Heresy: A Study of Milton and Origen* (Chicago, 1963), and Peter A. Fiore, *Milton and Augustine: Patterns of Augustinian Thought in “Paradise Lost”* (University Park, Pa., 1981). For further discussion of the influence of Origen on the Cambridge Platonists, and George Rust in particular, see *The Cambridge Origenists: George Rust’s Letter of Resolution concerning Origen and the Chief of His Opinions*, ed. Alfons Füst and Christian Hensternan (Münster, 2012).

²¹ In the earlier work, *A Maske at Ludlow* (1637), this infernal economy is then self-sustaining: “Self-fed and self-consum’d” (line 597).

²² Neither reading, of course, accords with Milton's position in these sardonic lines from *De doctrina Christiana* where he is intent on dismissing what he holds to be the naïve notion that hell is located at the center of the earth: "Quòd si totus mundus demum conflagrabit . . . certè conflagret una necesse erit, et eandem cum terra sortem subeat. Quod si fieret, praeclarè sanè cum damnatis actum esset" (If the whole world will eventually be burnt up. . . . Surely [hell] will have to be burnt up at the same time, and undergo the same fate as the earth. But if this happened, it would be a really splendid finish for the damned) (*DDC* 1. 33, OM 8:892–93).

²³ Indeed, Rust implies that the distinction between what the phrase "*from all eternitie*" signifies when used "in Scripture" as opposed to "in the sense of the *Schools*," where "*Scholastick Eternity*" represents an infinitude of time is common knowledge when he observes, "Every lexicographer & Expositor will furnish you with authorities enough to confirm" it (*Letter of Resolution*, 132).

²⁴ For instance, Milton says, "Regnum Christi, quemadmodum sacerdotium, . . . est aeternum: id est quoad mundus duraverit" (Christ's kingdom, like his priesthood, is eternal . . . that is, lasting as long as the world shall last) (*DDC* 1.15, OM 8:506–07).

²⁵ Cf. 2 Pet. 3:11–12 and 2 Cor. 5:1.

²⁶ Rust, *Letter of Resolution*, 134. This ameliorative process is not to be confused with purgatory. Milton was, of course, strongly opposed to the idea of purgatory, and his conviction that "anima cum corpore ad diem usque resurrectionis obdormiscit" (the soul falls asleep until the day of resurrection) (*DDC* 1.16, OM 8:534–55), provided, he believed, an unchallengeable refutation of its existence.

²⁸ See Origen, *On First Principles*, foreword John C. Cavadini, intro. Henri de Lubac (Notre Dame, Indiana: Christian Classics, 2013), 3.6.6, 328.

²⁹ See Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, ed. and trans. R. W. Dyson, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), 21.17, 1076-77..

³⁰ Patrides, "Salvation of Satan," 472.

³¹ For instance, Benjamin Whichcote, provost of King's College, Cambridge, and another leading member of the Cambridge Platonists, charted his journey from a position of strict Calvinism to one nearer to Arminianism in a series of letters to Anthony Tuckney, his former tutor at Emanuel College, Cambridge. See Benjamin Whichcote and Anthony Tuckney, *Eight Letters*, ed. Samuel Salter (London, 1753).

³² See Rust, *Letter of Resolution*, 74 and 76.

³³ Ibid., 74-75.

³⁴ Ibid., 133, 77.

³⁵ Ibid., 76.

³⁶ Patrick Hume, *Poetical Works of John Milton. Together with explanatory notes on each book of the "Paradise Lost" by P.H.* (London, 1695).

³⁷ For a richly detailed and sensitive account of the way Milton dramatizes the "human experience of Grace as the chance to change," see Forsyth, *Satanic Epic*, 299.

³⁸ Wilson notes the way one aspect of his divided self accuses the other: "As soon as Adam adopts one position he immediately corrects it with a 'yet' or 'but'" (*Mocked with Death*, 173).

³⁹ For a different response to Adam's admission of guilt, see Louis Martz, *Paradise Within: Studies in Vaughan, Traherne, and Milton* (New Haven, Conn., 1964), who argues that "his rigorous self-examination utterly different from Satan's self-

deception, leads to an emphasis on ‘me’ that shows signs of a regenerated ‘will’” (139–40).

⁴⁰ *Of Reformation in England* (1641), in *The Works of John Milton*, 18 vols., ed. Frank Allen Patterson et al. (New York, 1931), 3.1, p. 76; hereafter cited as CM.

⁴¹ For a different reading that sees Eve as “far more self-serving than selfless at this point,” see Georgia Christopher, “The Verbal Gate to Paradise: Adam’s ‘Literary Experience’ in Book X of *Paradise Lost*,” *PMLA* 90 (1975): 69.

⁴² While Adam’s response may smack of some residual resentment toward Eve, he makes a fair point in claiming that Eve will scarcely be able to support God’s wrath if she cannot endure his own anger. Indeed, even Christ found it hard to withstand his Father’s wrath.

⁴³ It is her *soft* words taken together with her *tears* that ensure that we become aware of the literal meaning of *relent*, derived from its Latin root (*re* + *lentare*, to bend, to become soft again); see Mandy Green, “‘Softening the Stony’: Deucalion, Pyrrha, and the Process of Regeneration in *Paradise Lost*,” *Milton Quarterly* 35 (2001): 9–21.

⁴⁴ It is, of course, under the influence of Eve’s “Heav’nly forme / Angelic, but more soft, and Feminine” that Satan finds himself “abstracted . . . / From his own evil” at least for a time (9.457–58, 463–64).

⁴⁵ As Milton puts it in *De doctrina Christiana*, it is only “séque ex sensu divinae misericordiae ad Deum humillime convertit” (out of a sense of divine mercy [a regenerate person] turns back most humbly to God) (*DDC* 1.19, OM 8:568–69).

⁴⁶ See Luke 23:30: “Blessed are the barren and the wombs that never bear.”

⁴⁷ Satan’s temptation partly works because he offers her a fast-track promotion.

⁴⁸ As Forsyth helpfully explains, “it is only at this point that Adam truly *hears* the hope for humankind contained within prophecy of the protevangelion” (*Satanic Epic*, 287).

⁴⁹ As Milton glosses the process in *De doctrina Christiana*, one of the effects of regeneration is saving faith: “Ex fide spes oritur; certissima nempe rerum earum expectatio futurarum quae in Christo iam nostrae per fidem sunt” (From faith arises hope, namely, a very sure expectation of those future things which through faith are already ours in Christ) (*DDC* 1.20, OM 8:592–93).

⁵⁰ Mary Hoffman, “The Hard-Hearted Hell of Self-Delusion,” *Milton Quarterly* 7 (1973): 14.

⁵¹ “In hac vita” is added, with a caret; see *De doctrina Christiana*, OM 8:332n74.

⁵² Classic treatments of Milton’s Arminian views are: Maurice Kelley, *This Great Argument: A Study of Milton’s “De Doctrina Christiana” as a Gloss upon “Paradise Lost”* (Princeton, N.J., 1941); and Dennis Danielson, *Milton’s Good God: A Study in Literary Theodicy* (Cambridge, 1982). See also Stephen M. Fallon, “Milton’s Arminianism and the Authorship of *De Doctrina Christiana*,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 41 (1999): 103–27; and *Autonomy and Human Dignity: Origen in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Alfons Fürst and Christian Hensternan (Münster, 2012).

⁵³ *De doctrina Christiana*, 1.12, in CM 15:205. The accompanying note to the Oxford edition rightly points out that, by omitting the negative in its translation, the Columbia edition blocks the Arminian view here.

⁵⁴ Milton contends here that humankind may contribute to their regeneration just as much as to their damnation: “Neque ita tamen à Deo solo induration impiorum est . . . suam abunde operam conferant” (the hardening of the wicked does not stem so

much from God alone but that they themselves too . . . abundantly contribute their own effort) (*DDC* 1.8, OM 8:332–33).